DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 253 IR 054 757

TITLE The Library as a Humanistic Workplace. A Report to the LAMA Board.
INSTITUTION American Library Association, Chicago, IL. Library Administration and Management Association.
PUB DATE 3 Jul 91
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change; Communication (Thought Transfer); Cultural Awareness; Decision Making; Human Factors Engineering; *Humanism; *Job Satisfaction; *Labor Conditions; *Library Administration; Library Services; *Professional Development; Rewards; *Work Environment

ABSTRACT

While it may seem redundant to be considering the library as a humanistic workplace, since most libraries are probably at the upper end of the quality of workplace life, there is always some room for improvement, making the topic worthy of exploration. The most important consideration in a humanistic workplace is how people are treated. There is a link between the way staff are treated and the quality of the product and services delivered. In this report to the Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA) by the LAMA Task Force on the Library as a Humanistic Workplace, the following five major characteristics of a humanistic workplace are discussed: (1) communication; (2) goal clarity; (3) decision making; (4) professional and personal development; and (5) rewards and recognition. These characteristics are expanded upon to indicate responsibilities of the organization, the manager, and the individual. Additional characteristics of the humanistic workplace, for which the system, the manager, and the individual share some responsibilities include a stimulating workplace in a safe and comfortable environment, characterized by trust and acceptance of diversity, with appropriate ways to handle change. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 364 253

THE LIBRARY AS A HUMANISTIC WORKPLACE

A Report to the LAMA Board

July 3, 1991

TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

John Blegan
Janice Burrows
Karyle Butcher
Cheryl Bernero
Susan Jurow
Susan Lee
Evelyn Minick
Kenna Forsyth, Chairperson

IR052021

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Karen Muller

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE LIBRARY AS A HUMANISTIC WORKPLACE

Introduction

It may seem redundant to be considering the library as a humanistic workplace. On a continuum, most libraries are probably on the upper end of good in the the quality of their worklife. The general emphasis we have on service tends to trickle to the backrooms and the way we treat each other. However, there is always room for improvement - and for some libraries a lot may be needed - and so it is worthwhile to explore this topic.

The most important consideration in a humanistic workplace is how people are treated -- how they treat each other and how the organization treats them -- and whether people care about the thoughts and feeling of others. Policies, procedures and all aspects of the organizational environment should reflect this.

There is a link between the way staff are treated and the quality of the product and service they deliver. Treating staff well does not just yield people who feel good about themselves and each other. It produces people who create better results. An organization can be humanistic and still get things done -- and done well. The end result, quality products and services, is still the bottom line.

Success or productivity, then, does not have to be achieved at the expense of the people responsible for bringing it about. There needs to be a balance, however, between the needs of the organization and the needs of the people working for the organization. That balance can be achieved by all levels of staff sharing responsibilities for the way things are done and the workplace environment in general.

Creating a humanistic workplace is an ongoing process. In fact, a library reaching for such an idealistic goal will never be 100% there. But it is a process and one worth having around, like democracy. For democracy to work at all levels in our nation, certainly our organizations and institutions need to be democratic and thus humanistic. Such values as teamwork, cooperation and respect for individual talents, skills and differences need to be in place and affecting the way we function in our libraries.

The following characteristics give a more detailed picture of a humanistic workplace. These together could form a checklist which a library could use to measure itself against and then set goals to close any gaps. It is not an exhaustive list, and so could be added to, and it should probably be tackled in small chunks.

The five major characteristics are presented first. They are fleshed out in three levels to indicate responsibilities held by the organization, the manager and the individual. These major characteristics represent the processes and procedures -- the systems -- that are the heart of any organization. The last five characteristics are symptoms that flow from the "systems" characteristics. They get a lesser billing and their single level descriptions indicate that the organization, the manager and the individual share the same responsibilities.

COMMUNICATION

Organization

- Publishes, distributes and facilitates access to written policies and procedures
- Shares unwritten policies, norms and procedures
- Creates regular channels for information and idea sharing
- Encourages lateral, upward and downward idea sharing
- Provides appropriate and timely response to upward communication
- Provides access to all information for successful accomplishment of job responsibilities
- Encourages and rewards new ideas
- Listens actively and responds appropriately

Manager

- Provides clear and immediate feedback, both positive and negative, to staff
- Provides regular channels for information and idea sharing
- Rewards and publicizes lateral, upward and downward idea sharing
- Listens actively and responds appropriately

Individual

- Communicates suggestions openly and to appropriate person
- Shares and discusses ideas with others
- Listens actively and responds appropriately

GOAL CLARITY

Organization

- Articulates mission statement, goals and objectives
- Establishes performance evaluation process/system and links it to mission
- Makes available resources to attain goals
- Maintains consistent expectations and behavior which reflect articulated goals
- Regularly reviews and revises goals, if necessary
- Adopts a simple organizational/cultural message and promulgates it

Manager

- Provides resources to attain goals
- Articulates and interprets organizational goals for use at the unit and individual level
- Maintains consistent behavioral expectations which reflect goals
- Exhibits consistent managerial behavior which reflects goals
- Links performance evaluation of individual contributions to the attainment of organizational goals

Individual

- Sets personal goals congruent with organizational goals
- Asks for goal clarity
- Supports goal attainment
- Contributes to organizational goal achievement

DECISION MAKING

Organization

- Establishes and communicates structure and processes for decision making
- Places decision making at the appropriate level
- Makes timely decisions
- Empowers staff to participate in decisions related to their work
- Establishes effective and efficient information systems to support the decision making process

Manager

- Communicates staff concerns and ideas to top decision makers
- Provides for person to person discussions
- Encourages open and candid discussions
- Communicates his/her point of view to the staff
- Clarifies for staff their role in the decision making process

Individual

- Contributes actively in decision making processes
- Listens and tries to understand others' points of view
- Is open and candid with managers and with other staff
- Supports management decisions that are arrived at in an open and fair manner
- Makes appropriate decisions within his/her job responsibilities

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organization

- Writes and makes available a staff development plan
- Allocates money in the budget for staff development
- Includes development goals and strategies in the performance evaluation process
- Schedules periodic needs assessment
- Provides released time for staff development activities
- Provides training for job related skills and especially for skills needed for new services and procedures
- Promotes from within the organization
- Supports involvement in professional organizations
- Provides opportunities for job enrichment

Manager

- Provides the information, tools and training for staff to do their jobs
- Communicates performance expectations
- Gives feedback to staff
- Includes staff in appropriate decision making
- Utilizes talents of staff
- Develops areas of potential
- Provides opportunities for job enrichment

Individual

- Seeks ways to contribute skills and talents
- Accepts joint responsibility for developing job-related skills
- Participates fully in appropriate training activities

REWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Organization

- Provides rewards/recognition for a variety of contributions (longevity, performance, achievement, attendance, etc.)
- Provides variety of rewards/recognition (training, promotional opportunity, publicity, etc.)
- Provides equitable, fair system and encourages staff input
- Communicates the principles and processes of the rewards/recognition system

Manager

- Provides variety of rewards/recognition
- Provides feedback
- Supports individual's development

Individual

- Strives to achieve the best possible product/result
- Recognizes/rewards the work of others
- Articulates needs

CHANGE

- Change is linked to organizational goals.
- Communication regarding change is open and constant.
- Participation is sought from all levels of staff.
- A reasonable adjustment period is allowed.
- Appropriate retraining is offered.

TRUST

- Promises and commitments are honored.
- Staff feel safe in expressing their opinions. An absence of hostility or indifference exists to enable staff to feel less necessity for fighting to obtain rights.
- Staff work in a mutually supportive way. Interactions are without hostility or indifference.
- Staff feel the freedom to try, to experiment and sometimes to make mistakes.

STIMULATING WORKPLACE

- Staff development and continuing education are encouraged and supported.
- Individual viewpoints are sought and opportunities for exchange are provided.
- Opportunities for social and intellectual interaction are available.
- Variety within job assignments is encouraged.
- The physical environment of the workplace is stimulating: lighting, furnishing, color, windows.
- Risk taking and flexibility are rewarded and failure can be seen as an opportunity.
- Win-win competition is encouraged.
- Humor is welcomed and appreciated.
- Creativity is fostered.
- Decision making in the organization is pushed down as far as possible.

DIVERSITY

- Staff are viewed as an asset; differences are valued and highlighted.
- The workplace looks diverse; hiring, promotion and retention practices support diversity.
- Conflict is recognized as a positive force that permits individuals and the organization to clarify, debate and resolve different points of view.
- Library collections, programs and displays reflect diverse needs.
- A variety of occasions and holidays is recognized and celebrated by the organization.
- Individual physical needs are accommodated.
- A variety of workstyles and learning styles is respected.
- Flexibility in scheduling and job assignments is available.
- Opportunities exist for formal and informal mentoring.
- Minority networking is supported and encouraged.
- Prejudicial behavior is not tolerated and is dealt with swiftly.

SAFE, COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

- Effective programs and procedures dealing with safety and occupational health are in place.
- Hazardous conditions are identified and corrected in a timely manner.
- A disaster preparedness program exists and is understood by all.
- There is an ongoing commitment to a safe and comfortable work environment, such as adequate workspace, proper lighting and attention to security.
- Health insurance, disability, workers' compensation and EAP plans are provided.